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## (54) Coin freed gaming machine

(57) A coin freed gaming machine comprises a cabinet having on its front panel;

a) a drive control handle (2) which activates the machine

b) four windows (3), three arranged in a line and one offset from the others, each window having a central recessed area flanked by a ramp area which offers perimetric continuity of viewing;

c) three push buttons (4), one for each of the windows arranged in a line;

and the machine including a microprocessor device which controls the operation of the machine in accordance with a program which in turn is written having regard to predetermined rules of play, such that when the machine begins to operate following activation by a player of the control handle (2), a succession of displays appears in each of all the four windows (3), it being possible using one or more of the corresponding push buttons (4), to freeze or retain in one or more of the three aligned windows, selected displays, such as to match according to playing rule, with a display which by the end of a play appears frozen in the fourth offset window, the rules providing that certain matches justify a prize or reward.

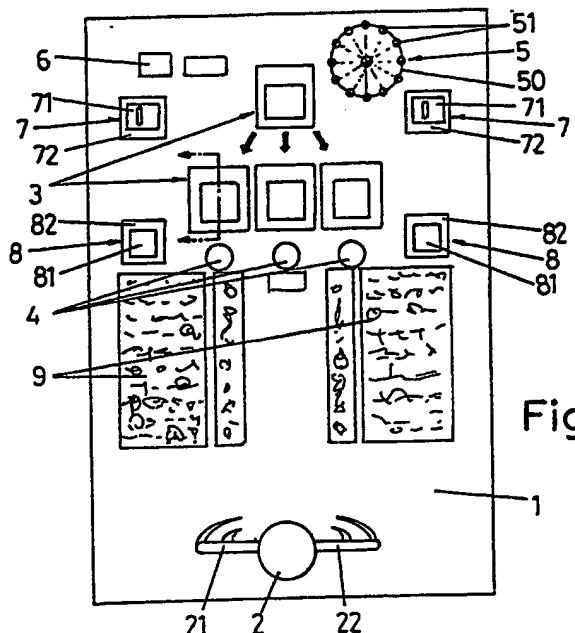
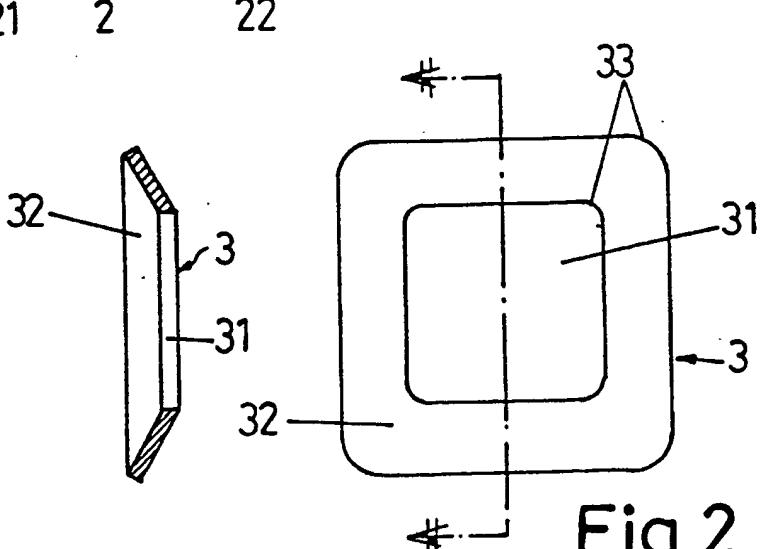
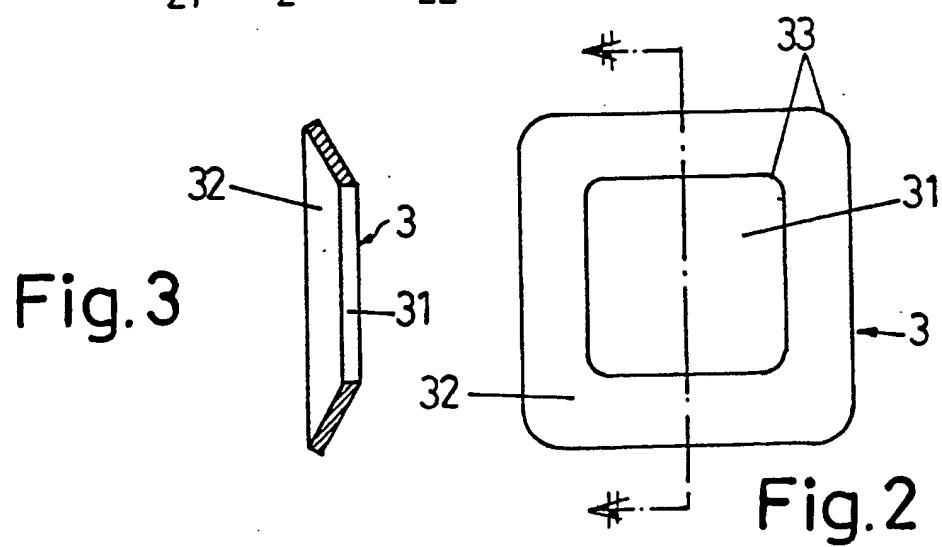
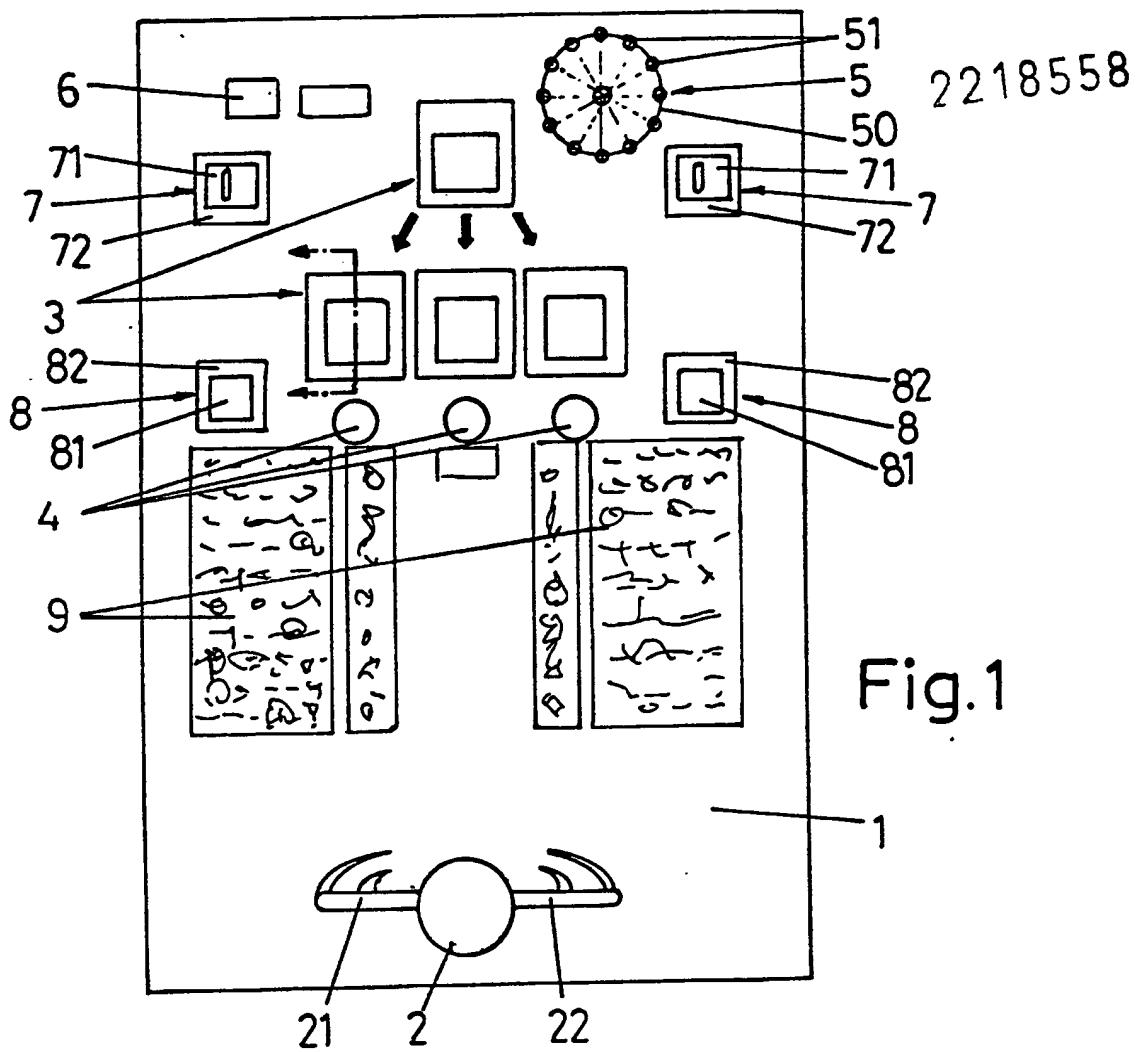


Fig.1

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COIN FREED GAMING MACHINE

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There is currently on the market a multitude of recreational machines which are coin or token "freed" (ie they can only be operated after the correct coins or tokens have been accepted by the machine).

All the machines of the above-mentioned type comprise a cabinet, inside which are located the corresponding mechanisms for achieving a specific function.

The present invention relates to a coin freed gaming machine having such a cabinet containing such mechanisms, and having a front panel therefor, there being on said front panel:

- a) a drive control handle which activates the machine when turned in one direction or another;
  - b) four windows, three arranged in a line and one offset from the others, each window having a central recessed area flanked by a ramp area which offers perimetric continuity;
  - c) three push buttons, one for each of the windows arranged in a line;
- and the machine including a microprocessor device which controls the operation of the machine in accordance with a program which in turn is written having regard to predetermined rules of play, such that when the machine begins to operate following activation by a player of the control handle, a succession of displays appears in each of all the four windows, it being possible using one or more of the corresponding push buttons, to freeze or retain in one or more of the three aligned windows, selected displays, such as to match according to playing rule, with a display which by the end of a play appears frozen in the fourth window, the rule providing that certain matches justify a prize or reward.

Preferably also the front panel includes an upper indicator displaying game possibilities; and a factor is displayed by the upper indicator following activation of the drive control handle to effect starting of a play. And preferably also the front panel includes a small ring of windows backed by lights, a selected window being illuminated to indicate the value of any reward or prize due to a player at the completion of a play.

A non-limiting embodiment of the present invention is described below. This in no way rules out other embodiments incorporating accessory changes which do not modify its underlying principle; on the contrary, the present invention also covers all variants thereof.

Figure 1 represents a view in elevation of the new front panel for a coin or token freed recreational machine according to the invention, with its associated elements and/or integral parts.

Figure 2 represents an enlarged view of a window 3 of those represented in Figure 1.

Figure 3 represents a section in profile of the window 3, according to the indications of Figures 1 and 2.

In accordance with the invention and according to the embodiment represented, the machine includes a front panel 1 which has a polygonal configuration (rectangular, vertically oblong) which can be adapted to the cabinet whereon it is located; and such cabinet will house the various mechanisms (not shown) for achieving the various functions of the machine, according to predetermined rules or modes of play, some of which functions will be apparent from what follows.

In said panel 1 there are located the following: at the bottom, a drive control handle 2; at the top, four viewing windows 3, three of which only are in line; in the middle area, three push buttons 4, one for each of the viewing windows which are in line; in the upper area on one side, a small ring of lights 5 which are preferably selectively illuminated under the control of a random function generator; in the upper area on the other side, an indicator 6 for displaying game possibilities; at the top, on at least one side, at least one coin slot 7; underneath each coin slot 7, a small window 8 for collecting coins not accepted for play by the slots 7; and also, in the central middle area, or on one or both sides, printed notices 9 indicating the playing regulations and stating the objectives to be achieved.

The drive control handle 2 has two arms 21,22 and by activating one or another or these the control is rotated in one direction or another and the machine is set in operation. The speed or degree of operation of the handle 2 could be arranged to effect the rate of change of the showings in the various windows 3 thus varying the degree of difficulty. Alternatively or additionally, the manner of operation of the starting handle might be used to introduce a factor which is effective to adjust the duration of time before a display is frozen in the fourth offset window. This degree of difficulty applicable might be indicated in the display 6; and it might be reflected in the functions introduced following operation of the random function generator 5. The indicator 6 showing game possibilities is preferably of the "LED" type with seven excitable bands.

The windows 3 are four identical windows, three arranged in a line and one offset from the others. Each window 3 has a central area 31, (or window proper) recessed with respect to the front plane of the panel 1 and flanked by a ramp area 32 which offers perimetric continuity. All the angles of both areas 31, 32 are rounded 33. Three push buttons 4 which may be trunco-cylindrical, are located one under each of the three windows 3 located in a line.

The small ring of lights 5 includes a small ring of windows 50 on the panel 1, each of which displays information, preferably achieved by silk-screen printing, and points of light 51 which are illuminated behind selected windows, it may be randomly or so that they seem to "rotate"; the one window 50 which is illuminated at the conclusion of a play, representing and informing the player of the value of any reward or prize due from that play.

The front panel 1 is completed with other elements which are common to this type of machine. The most important are: the coin slots 7, in Figure 1, two coin slots 7 located at the top, one on either side of the panel 1; and the small windows 8 for collecting coins not accepted for play by the slots 7. The slots 7 and 8 are to be found in a central area 71, 81 recessed with respect to the front plane of the panel 1, said recesses being defined by ramp areas 72, 82 which offers perimetric continuity of viewing. According to a preferred feature of the invention, the slots 7 and small windows 8 have generally the same configuration as the windows 3 shown in Figures 2 and 3.

A microprocessor device is adapted and arranged to control the operation of the machine in play, according to a program, and in accordance with rules of play, and modes thereof, as set out on notices 9.

With this structure, operation takes place in the following manner. When a coin is introduced into one of the selectors 7 and is accepted for play, the machine is "freed" and can be set in operation, and a play can be commenced by activation of the control handle 2. As set out above the speed or direction of operation of the handle 2 is influenced by the player, and these factors may be employed to govern the degree of difficulty, or the mode, applicable to a particular play and as shown by the notices 9. The mode of play or the degree of difficulty applying to a given play will be shown on the indicator 6.

At a predetermined time after the play has commenced, various displays will appear sequentially in all the windows 3 of the set of three aligned windows; and the order of these displays as they appear, may be different for each window, or even at random; and after a predetermined time duration the display in the fourth offset window 3 will be frozen. In the three aligned windows 3 these displays can be frozen and retained using the push buttons 4. If they are not retained using the push buttons 4 they are automatically retained at the end of a certain time corresponding to the end of a play.

The matter displayed behind the four windows 3 is continually varied once the drive control handle 2 is operated, the display behind a given window 3 being frozen when the appropriate button 4 is operated. These displays may be of any kind including numerical. The objective will be to match frozen displays according to some known pattern or rule - as will be set out on panels 9. For example the matter displayed may correspond to the markings of playing cards and the desired matches may correspond to the rules of poker.

It will be noted that the player will only have control of three of the four windows, the display frozen in the upper window 3 being outside of his control, being random, and frozen at a predetermined instant of time under the control of the program governing operation of the machine.

In one particular example the display behind each window might be a drum with 52 peripheral segments (or 53 if a joker is included), on each of which is a representation of a playing card, being one of a full pack of cards. In a simpler format the set of displays available for viewing through each window 3, may be far smaller e.g. consisting of the numbers 1 to 5; and the object here might be either to achieve some match of the numbers or an ordered sequence thereof - e.g. either '1234' or '2345' (possible only if the upper window freezes at a '1' or at a '2'), or 2.2.2.2 or 3.3.3.3 etc. or as may be provided by rule. Instead of numbers, colours or symbols may be used.

The indicator 6 which may be illuminated, may show the degree of difficulty of a particular play, eg it may indicate the possibility of locating in the three windows 3 in a line, a set of displays to match (according to rule of play) that display which appears already, or which by the end of a play will appear, frozen in the fourth offset window 3; the fourth display being frozen at random and after a predetermined duration of play, by the machine as distinct from by the player. If the display in the offset window is frozen first, the player has the possibility of matching it in one or more of the three windows under his control. But the later this window is frozen, so the element of chance increasingly predominates.

If a combination justifying a reward or prize has been obtained in a play, the small ring of lights 5 "rotates" and indicates the value of a prize; the wheel 5 therefore introducing a function, which may also be chosen at random from various such functions, into the computation of the value of the prize finally awarded.

CLAIMS

1. A coin freed gaming machine having a cabinet housing the usual mechanisms for performing the functions intended for the machine, and having a front panel therefor, there being on said front panel:
  - a) a drive control handle (2) which activates the machine when turned in one direction or another;
  - b) four windows (3), three arranged in a line and one offset from the others, each window having a central recessed area flanked by a ramp area which offers perimetric continuity of viewing;
  - c) three push buttons (4), one for each of the windows arranged in a line;and the machine including a microprocessor device which controls the operation of the machine in accordance with a program which in turn is written having regard to predetermined rules of play, such that when the machine begins to operate following activation by a player of the control handle (2), a succession of displays appears in each of all the four windows (3), it being possible using one or more of the corresponding push buttons (4), to freeze or retain in one or more of the three aligned windows, selected displays, such as to match according to playing rule, with a display which by the end of a play appears frozen in the fourth offset window, the rules providing that certain matches justify a prize or reward.

2. A machine according to claim 1 and including further, on said front panel:-

an upper indicator (6) displaying game possibilities: a factor being displayed by the upper indicator following activation of the drive control handle (2) to effect starting of a play.

3. A machine according to either of claims 1 or 2 and including further, on said front panel:-

a small ring (5) of windows backed by lights, a selected window being illuminated to indicate the value of any reward or prize due to a player at the completion of a play.

4. A machine according to any of the preceding claims, characterised in that the front panel includes at least one coin slot (7) and at least one small window (8) for collecting coins not accepted for play, and wherein each slot and each window has a central recessed area flanked by a ramp area which offers perimetric continuity.

5. A machine with a prize according to any of the preceding claims, and wherein said microprocessor device is so programmed that firstly, at a predetermined time after the play has commenced, various displays will appear sequentially in all the windows (3), the order of these displays being either different or random for each window; and secondly, so that after a predetermined time duration the display in the single offset window (3) will be frozen.

6. A machine according to any of the preceding claims, and wherein the drive control handle (2) has two arms (21,22) and by activating one or another or these the control is rotated in one direction or another and the machine is set in operation, the speed or degree of operation of the handle (2) being arranged either to effect the rate of change of the showings in the various windows (3) thus varying the degree of difficulty, and/or to effect adjustment of the duration of time before the display is frozen in the fourth offset window.
7. A machine according to claim 6, and wherein the degree of difficulty applicable is indicated in the display (6).
8. A coin freed gaming machine according to any preceding claim and substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to the accompanying drawings.